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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[4 March 1997]

The human rights situation in South Korea

1. South Korea's economic success has long concealed the systematic violation of human rights practised by successive military regimes. The "civil" regime of President Kim Young Sam uses the same methods as previous military dictatorships, as attested by the violent repression of the demonstrations following the fraudulent adoption of the law of 26 December 1996, which violated the labour standards drawn up by the ILO (restrictions on freedom of association, arbitrary dismissals, reinforcement of political police powers, etc.).

2. The "civil" regime has also maintained in force the "National Security Act", which assimilates any opponent to an "agent" of the North subject to the severest penal sanctions. There are just as many trade unionists in prison as under military regimes.

3. Prisoners of war more than 70 years old, who have been detained since the 1953 armistice agreements and released after more than 40 years in detention, have been denied the right to be reunited with their families in the North, despite requests from the North Korean Red Cross to the South Korean Red Cross and the ICRC.

4. The international protection from which the South Korea regime has benefited from the outset, allowing it to conceal its practices, contrary to human rights, is simply the result of South Korea's strategic position and its economic importance on the world market.

5. We therefore ask the Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special rapporteur on the human rights situation in South Korea, which is portrayed as a "model" for all developing countries.